JAPANESE
FAIRY TALE SERIES No. 16.

THE WONDERFUL TEA KETTLE

By Mrs. T. H. James.

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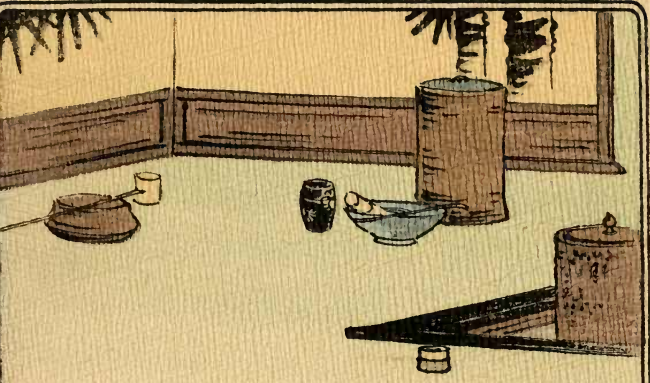

The Wonderful Tea-Kettle.

A LONG long time ago, at the temple of Morinji, in the province of Kotsuke there lived an old priest.

This old priest was very fond of the ceremonial preparing and drinking of tea known as *Chanoyu;*

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indeed, it was his chief interest and pleasure in life to conduct this ceremony.

One day he chanced to find in a second hand shop a very nice looking old tea-kettle, which he bought and took home with him, highly pleased by its fine shape and artistic appearance.

Next day he brought out his new purchase, and sat for a long time turning it round on this side and on that, and admiring it.

«You are a regular Beauty, that's what you are," he said, «I

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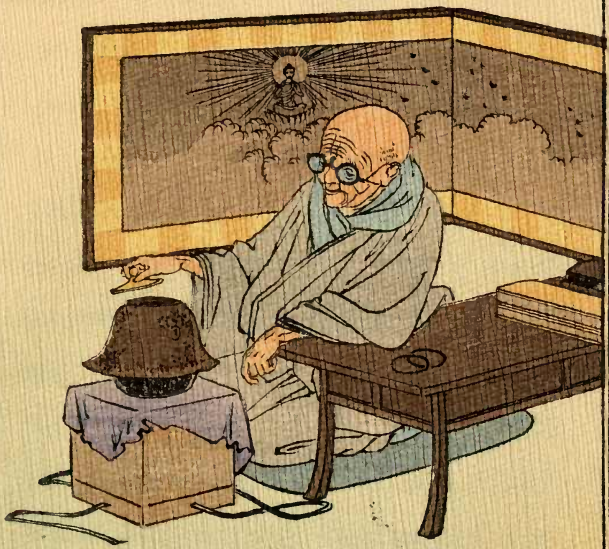
shall invite all my friends to the *Chanoyu*, and how astonished they will be at finding such an exquisite kettle as this!"



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He placed his treasure on the top of a box where he could see it to the best advantage, and sat admiring it and planning how he should invite his guests. After a while he became drowsy and began to nod, and at last fell forward, his head on his desk, fast asleep.

Then a wonderful transformation took place. The tea-kettle began to move. From its spout appeared a hairy head, at the other side out came a fine bushy tail, next, four feet made themselves visible, while fine fur seemed gradually to cover

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the surface of the kettle. At last, jumping off the box, it began capering about the room for all the world just like a badger.

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Three young novices who were at study in the next room heard the noise, and, when one of them peeped through the sliding doors, what was his astonishment to see the tea-kettle on four feet, dancing up and down the room!

He cried out "Oh! what a horrible thing! The tea-kettle is changed into a badger!"

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"What!" said the second novice, "Do you mean to say that the tea-kettle is turned into a badger? What nonsense!" So saying, he pushed his companion

to one side and peeped in, but he also was terrified by what he saw and screamed.

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"It's a goblin! It's coming at us, let us run away!"

The third novice was not so easily frightened.

"Come, this is rather fun," said he, "how the creature does jump, to be sure! I will rouse the master and let him see too."

So he went into the room and shook the priest, crying. "Wake! Master, Wake! A strange thing has happened."

"What's the matter?" said the

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old man, drowsily rubbing his eyes "what a noisy fellow!"

"Anyone would be noisy when such a strange thing as this is going on.

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Only look master, your tea-kettle has got feet and is running about."

"What! What! What! What's that you say?" asked the priest again. "The kettle got feet! What's this! Let me see!"

But by the time the old man was thoroughly roused the tea-kettle had turned into its ordinary shape, and stood quietly on its box again.

"What foolish young fellows you are!" said the priest. "There stands a kettle on the top of a box, surely there is nothing very strange in that. No, no, I have heard of the

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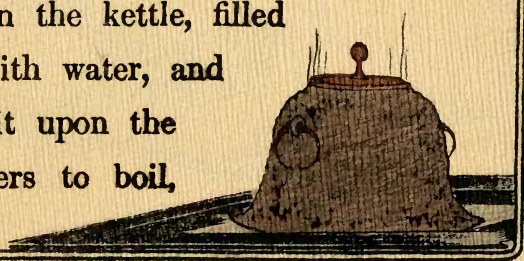
rolling-pin that grew a pair of wings and flew away, but, long as I have lived, never have I heard before of a tea-kettle walking about on its own feet. You will never make me believe that."

But for all that, the priest was a little uneasy in his mind, and kept thinking of the incident all that day. When evening came, and he was alone in his room, he took down the kettle, filled it with water, and set it upon the embers to boil,



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intending to make some tea. But, as soon as the water began to boil—"Hot! Hot!" cried the kettle, and jumped off the fire.

"Help! Help!" cried the priest, terrified out of his wits.

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But when the novices rushed to his help, the kettle at once resumed its natural form; so, one of them, seizing a stick cried.—

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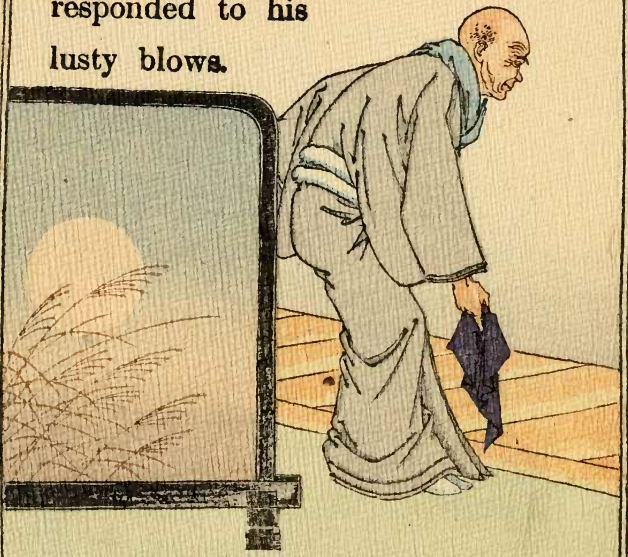
"We'll soon find out whether it's alive or not," and began beating it with might and main. There was evidently no life in the thing, and only a metalic clang! clang! responded to his lusty blows.



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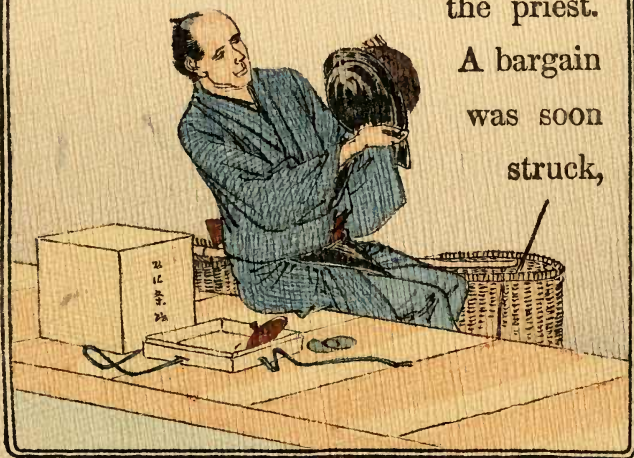
Then the old priest heartily repented having bought the mischievous tea-kettle, and was debating in his own mind how he should get rid of it, when who should drop in but the tinker?"

"Here's the very man," thought the priest. A bargain was soon struck,



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the tinker bought the tea-kettle for a few coppers, and carried it home, well pleased with his purchace.

Before going to bed he took another look at it, and found it still better than he had at first thought, so he went to sleep that night in the best of spirits.

In the midst of a pleasant dream the tinker suddenly started up, thinking he

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heard somebody moving in the room, but when he opened his eyes and looked about, he could see nobody.

"It was only a dream, I suppose," said he to himself, as he turned over, and went to sleep again.

But he was disturbed once more by some one calling—"Tinker! Tinker! Get up! Get up!"

This time he sprang up, wide awake, and lo and behold, there was the tea-kettle with the head, tail, feet and fur of a badger, strutting up and down the room!

"Goblin! Goblin!" shrieked the tinker. But the tea-kettle langhed and said.—

"Don't be frightened, my dear Tinker. I am not a goblin, only a wonderful tea-kettle. My name is *Bumbuku-Chagama*, and I will

bring good luck to anyone who treats me well; but of course, I don't like to be set on the fire, and then beaten with sticks, as happened to me up at the temple yesterday."

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"How can I please you, then?" asked the tinker. "Shall I keep you in a box?"

"Oh! no, no," answered the tea-kettle, I like nice sweet things to eat, and sometimes a little wine to drink, just like yourself. Will you keep me in your house and feed me? And, as I would not be a burden upon you, I will work for you in any way you like."

To this the tinker agreed.

Next morning he provided a good feast for *Bumbuku*, who then spoke —

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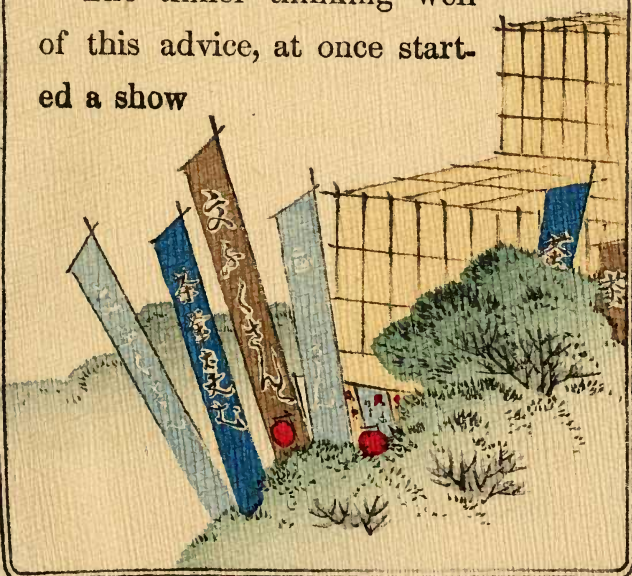
"I certainly am a wonderful and accomplished tea-kettle, and my advice is that you take me round the country as a show with accompaniments of singing and music."

The tinker thinking well of this advice, at once started a show



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which named the
Bumbuku- *Chagama.*
The lucky tea-kettle
at once made the affair a success,
for not only did he walk about
on four legs, but he danced the
tight rope, and went through all

kinds of acrobatic
perform- ances, end-
ing by making a

profound
bow to the
spectators, and begging for
their future patronage.

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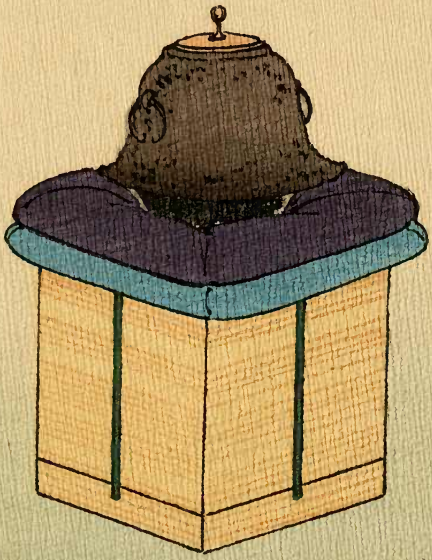
The fame of these performances soon spread abroad, and the theatre was filled daily to overflowing, until, at length even the princes of the land sent to order the tinker and his kettle to come to them, and the show would take place, to the great delight of the princesses and ladies of the court.

At last the tinker grew so rich that he retired from business, and wishing his faithful kettle also to be at rest, he took it back, together with a large share of his wealth, to the Temple of Morinji, where

it was laid up as a precious treasure, and some say, even worshipped as a saint.



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